بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

قل الله ينجيكم منها ومن كل كرب ثم أنتم تشركون

RED SULPHUR

‘Abd Allah ibn Abi Bakr al-‘Aydarus

MABDA

English Islam Series — Book Number 17

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم



Say, "It is Allah who saves you from it and from every distress; then you [still] associate others with Him."

Al-'An`am 6, 64

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Contents

The Red Sulphur and the Greatest Elixir on the Knowledge of the Secrets of Wayfaring to the King of Kings

by

ʿAbd Allah ibn Abi Bakr al-ʿAydarus

Translator's Introduction

The author of this short treatise, 'Abd Allah Ibn Abi Bakr al-'Aydarus, known as al-'Aydarus *al-Akbar*, to differentiate him from his son al-'Aydarus al-'Adani, was born in the year 811 AH/1408 CE. He was raised by his uncle Shaykh 'Umar al-Mihdar, following the death of both his father, when he was eight years old, and of his grandfather, who subsequently took care of him after the death of his father, when he was ten years old. Apart from his uncle Shaykh 'Umar, from whom he benefitted greatly, he studied under a group of jurists and Sufis and excelled in three of the disciplines of the Sacred Law: Qur'anic exegesis, Hadith, and Islamic law. He taught both the exoteric and esoteric sciences and scores of students graduated at his hands, many of whom went on to become great authorities in their own right, among them his brother Shaykh 'Ali and his three sons. Upon the death of his uncle, he was chosen as the spiritual head of the Ba 'Alawis. He was then only twenty-five years old, which attests to his tremendous spiritual maturity and vast erudition. 'Abd Allah Ibn Abi Bakr al-'Aydarus died on the way back to Tarim, after visiting al-Shihr, on 12 Ramadan in the year 865 AH/1462 CE at the age of fifty-four and was buried less than two days later in Tarim. His son Abu Bakr

replaced him as the spiritual leader of the Ba 'Alawis'Alawis.[1]

The Red Sulphur by 'Abd Allah Ibn AbiBakr al-'Aydarus, is a short treatise on spiritual wayfaring (*suluk*). It is not an academic work that targets the learned as its audience, nor is it an advanced treatise for the benefit of great saints like its author. It is written for the benefit of those who have just begun treading the spiritual path. Despite its brevity, though, it is extremely beneficial, replete as it is with insightful comments for all spiritual seekers. In certain aspects, the treatise may seem like a useful summary of more voluminous epistles on Sufism, such as the *Risala* of Abu'l-Qasim al-Qushayri or *'Awarif al-Ma'arif* of al-Suhrawardi. However, even though he might have used the above as references, especially concerning the definition of key Sufi terms, including those that describe spiritual states and stations (*ahwal* and *maqamat*), the author's own spiritual experience and realisation are evident in almost every line of the book.

The treatise begins by enumerating the numerous ways by means of which the spiritual path is trodden and then categorically states that none of these ways is possible without a perfected spiritual teacher. This is a point agreed upon by all Sufis. The veil between the servant and his Lord, which is made thicker by the ego and the company of the

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[1] See, al-Shilli, *al-Mashra' al-Rawi*, vol. 2, pp. 34–41; *al-Habshi, 'Iqd al-Yawaqit*, vol. 2, pp. 117-118 and also *A Blessed Valley: Wadi Hadramawt and the Alawi Tradition*, op. cit., pp. 100–103.

profligate, is impossible to lift without the direction of an expert spiritual guide. And true to the Ghazalian method of spiritual discipline, the author mentions that the Sufi path is based on four cardinals: eating little, talking little, sleeping little and withdrawing from people. Nonetheless, spiritual discipline, retreats, states and stations or any other spiritual attainments, the author hastens to add, cannot happen unless the spiritual wayfarer keeps the company of a perfected Shaykh.

Furthermore, as the state of *Ihsan* (spiritual excellence) depends on two other pillars of the religion, namely, having a sound belief and the practice of the obligatory prescriptions of Islam, the author included a short poem by Shaykh 'Abd Allah ibn As'ad al-Yafi'i that explains the creed of the People of the Sunnah. The true reality of the faith professed by the knowers of Allah, however, is that there is no way of knowing Allah as He is in Himself, far exalted and transcendent is He! In the face of this utter human incapability to know Allah as He is truly in Himself, the Gnostics opt, instead, to discard everything that can be known or not known. Therefore, they step out of themselves and see nothing and no-one except the Abidingly Real.

The second pillar, without which spiritual wayfaring is impossible, are works. Works nonetheless cannot be sound or accepted unless they proceed from a sense of Godfearingness. Godfearingness has five inward and outward robes: the first relates to the limbs and is achieved through complying

to Allah's commands and avoiding His prohibitions; the second relates to the hearts through the spiritual stations that they reach; the third relates to the spirits through the spiritual tastes they gain; the fourth relates to the inmost secrets through Unity; and the fifth relates to the secret of the secret, which is the greatest of all, as whoever obtains it, obtains the secret of viceregency.

The author then proceeds to explain who the real Sufi is, namely, he who combines the Sacred Law, the Path and the Ultimate Spiritual Reality. Then the difference between the People of Blame and the Qalandaris is explained. And because of what might ensue of objectionable matters from those who are ascribed to the Sufi path, the author sounds a note of caution. He enjoins Muslims to have a good opinion of other Muslims and not hasten to condemn them or declare them to be unbelievers due to words they may utter or acts they may carry out as long as there is an acceptable way of interpreting them.

After these preliminary remarks, the author of *The Red Sulphur* proceeds to expound the spiritual stations of the wayfarers and the fruits of these stations. He enumerates ten spiritual stations which yield ten gifted states. The ten stations are: (1) repentance; (2) scrupulousness; (3) renunciation; (4) steadfastness; (5) indigence; (6) gratitude; (7) fear; (8) hope; (9) trust; and (10) contentedness. These ten spiritual stations yield ten gifted states: (1) repentance yields the gift of the love of Allah; (2) scrupulousness yields

longing; (3) renunciation yields the humble devotion of the soul; (4) steadfastness yields intimacy with the Divine; (5) indigence yields proximity to the Divine; (6) gratitude yields diffidence towards the Divine; (7) fear yields spiritual drunkenness; (8) hope yields arrival; (9) trust in Allah yields extinction; and (10) contentedness yields subsistence.

After this excursion, 'Abd Allah Ibn Abi Bakr al-'Aydarus provides the definitions of key Sufi terms that are essential in understanding the nomenclature of the Sufis: 'the Sacred Law', 'the Path', 'the Ultimate Spiritual Reality', 'the moment' and 'the state'. He also explains the difference between spiritual stations and spiritual halting-places before he goes on to give succinct explanations of some major spiritual states: contractedness and elation; awe and intimacy; feigning ecstasy and ecstasy; ecstatic finding; gatheredness, individuatedness, and so forth.

The spiritual wayfarer must transcend all these spiritual states and stations. The seeker who is extinguished from his own acts subsists through Allah's acts. The one who is extinguished from his own attributes subsists through the attributes of Allah. And the one who is extinguished from his own entity subsists through the entity of Allah. When the invoker proceeds to the realm of extinction, the light of Divine Unity banishes from him all turbidity, and he is cleansed from all ugly traits and contraventions. Only then does he join the congregation of the spiritual adepts and

traverse the stages of the spiritual wayfarers until he reaches tranquillity and serenity.

When the invoker reaches the realm of the spirit, he contemplates the quality of beginninglessness as a bestowal of honour from Allah, and what an honour that is! The gate of the heart is unlocked with '*La Ilaha illa Lla*h' and the spirit's gate is unlocked with '*Allah*! *Allah*!' This is only the beginning. When remembrance takes over the heart, the invoker becomes the invoked and the invoked the invoker. The invoker is then completely extinguished from his own entity and from everything else. This is the Unity of the elite of the elite. This also explains why remembrance is the provision of the spiritual wayfarers. No one reaches Allah except by His remembrance. The remembrance of Allah is with words, works and states.

The author of *The Red Sulphur* then devotes a few paragraphs to the exposition of spiritual audition. First, he mentions that people react differently to spiritual audition, which is quite normal considering the disparate nature of their feelings and tastes. In his opinion, there are two types of spiritual audition. The first type is that which is legally indifferent, in which the listener only enjoys beautiful voices or summons emotions of joy and happiness. The second is that which is praiseworthy. This is the audition of the person who is overwhelmed by love of the Divine. As for those who have no hearts, their attendance of sessions of spiritual audition is forbidden, for audition only spurs their ugly traits

and increases their confusion and sins.

Finally, ʿAbd Allah Ibn Abi Bakr al-ʿAydarus states in this little precious book that the knowers of Allah are the folk of the Ultimate Spiritual Reality. They possess all the different types of knowledge relating to Allah, His names and His attributes. Ultimate Spiritual Reality, according to them, is the beholding of the lights of the mysteries of Lordship. The Path to this beholding are 'the strictnesses' of the Sacred Law. Whoever follows this Path will reach Ultimate Spiritual Reality.

Foreword

The path of God, to whom belongs whatsoever is in the heavens, and whatsoever is in the earth (*Al-Shura*, 42:53)

Praise be to Allah who has manifested from the eternal existentiation of *Kun* [Be!] the subtleties of universal spirits, and brought out from the hidden confinement of the unseen the suns of gnosis and divine verities, and extracted from the oceans of the Highest Light the jewels of the breaths of the luminous intellects, and fastened the rulings of the spheres of created beings by means of the secrets of the blessings which lie in the meanings of the conferences between the letters of the Lordly Names. He has created the amazing handicrafts of created articles from the meanings of the scrolls of universal souls, and drawn them by means of the pens of universal spirits. He is the Fashioner who has transcribed the essence of their meanings in the very soul of the knower of universal things as well as of detailed matters, who beholds the concealment of the spirit of the rare unique soul through the totality which contains the entities of the spirits of created beings; the one who assumes the moral traits of the Lordly Names' notices, who is consumed in the meanings of the names of the Divine Essence and the names of divine attributes, and who is also absorbed in the oceans

of the meanings of the blessings of the Lordly bounties and signs. So, utterly transcendent from resembling any of His creation is Allah! That with which reasoning faculties describe Him pales into nothingness, remaining incapable of comprehending the Divine Essence and attributes, left as they are with nothing but to acknowledge their failing and, thus, submit to His utter dignity, humbled like all other evanescent created beings. He fashioned out of nothing the universal spirits and intellects, and created the forms, bodies and all existents whether they be spiritual, isthmic or physical. O Lord! Invoke blessings upon the spirit of all created beings and the best of all existents, our master and beloved, Muhammad, may Allah's best, everlasting and goodly blessings and peace be upon him, and upon his household and Companions.

The Red Sulphur and the Greatest Elixir on the Knowledge of the Secrets of Wayfaring to the King of Kings

by ʿAbd Allah ibn Abi Bakr al-ʿAydarus

How to Tread the Spiritual Path?

Treading the spiritual path is by means of acts of worship, or spiritual stations, or spiritual states, or through breaths, or by means of gnosis, or by striking similes, or through compliance, or by the preservation of hearts, or by drawing comparisons, or through innate aptitudes, or by debates, or through keeping company, or through love, or by intermixing and showing affection while keeping a good opinion, which is one of the Muhammadan character traits, or through sessions of spiritual learning, or by assent and having faith, or by withdrawal and service, or by spiritual discipline, or through knowledge gifted directly from Allah without any intermediaries.

All this, though, cannot happen except by seeking a spiritual teacher who is a gnostic, someone who has treaded the spiritual path and who is also divinely attracted, spiritually accomplished and beloved; someone who has realised the ultimate fruits of the spiritual path and is also connected to the Divine; someone conversant with both the Scripturally-based disciplines and the discursive ones; a knower of

Allah and of his own self, who is both present and absent in retreats and when with others, whose heart is in the physical and spiritual world.

Moreover, all Sufi masters are unanimous that the thickest of veils between the servant and Allah is the soul that incites to evil, which is the locus of all ugly traits. And the thickest and most ugly trait is conceitedness coupled with love of this world, while the darkest of the dark are resentful envy, backbiting and talebearing. Sufi masters are also in agreement regarding the prohibition of mixing with evildoers, keeping the company of the corrupt and frequenting the opposite sex.

The Necessity of Keeping the Company of a Spiritual Master who is a Gnostic

Sufi masters are in agreement that their matter is built on: (1) eating little, (2) talking little, (3) sleeping little and (4) withdrawing from people.

Spiritual discipline, retreats, spiritual stations and all other spiritual quests cannot be obtained except through a spiritual master who is a gnostic, who is also called the Perfect Man.

A Poem on the Creed of the People of the Sunna

The creed of the people of the Sunna is found in the poem composed by Shaykh ʿAbd Allah ibn Asʿad al-Yafiʿi, which is as follows:

Our Lord is far exalted above 'how', 'where' or 'when'

And above everything that can be conceived by our minds.

He is also far exalted above imperfection, likeness, co-sharer, parent

Children or wives; He is Allah who is far greater.

His speech is beginninglessly eternal, when there was no letter

Accident, God forbid, body or substance.

He is willing, living, All-Knowing and speaking

And has power to do whatever He wills, as He is All-Hearing and All-Seeing.

Through hearing, knowledge, life and power

And also the rest of His attributes that belong to Him.

There is no obligation on Him, rather He punishes

Out of His justice and rewards and forgives out of His

favour.

Not through discursive reason, but through the Sacred Law, one apprehends this,

And He has decreed good and evil for all as something destined.

His vision is true and so is intercession,

The Pool, chastisement in the grave and Munkir.

So are the Resurrection, the Scale, the Fire and the Garden,

Which are already created as is the Bridge-over-Hell.

Are also true the prodigies of the saints and

Our pure and lofty Sacred Law has erased

The laws of all messengers and Ahmad

Is Allah's best of created beings, who will be put ahead and intercede.

His Companions are the best generation and the best of them

Is according to what they have sent forth or kept back.

The stars of guidance, they were all upright and magnanimous,

Their virtues are well-known and cannot be denied.

The best of them is their truthful one, the possessor of nobility.

The fourth best one is the possessor of virtue, Haydar.

Burning everlastingly in Hell is just for the unbeliever,

And whoever faces our Qibla ought not to be declared an unbeliever.

The Reality of Divine Unity According to the Sufis

Divine Unity amounts to the negation of subdivision within the Divine Essence, an essence that nothing is like unto It; the negation of likeness to His attributes and what is due to Him and the negation of a co-sharer in His acts and creation. The knowers of Allah and all spiritual masters maintain that the noblest description of Divine Unity is found in the words of our master Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, may Allah be well pleased with him, who said: 'Glory be to Him who has

not made a way for His creation to know Him [as He is in Himself].' The knowers of Allah and all spiritual masters also maintain that the Divine Unity that the Gnostics uphold is the singularizing of the Beginninglessly Eternal and the negation of incipience, in addition to leaving homelands, cutting off loved things, and shunning that which is known and that which is unknown. Instead, the Abidingly Real should take the stead of all these. Divine Unity is also, according to some Sufis, the overlapping of forms such that one does not say: 'for me', 'through me' or 'from me'. Rather, all these are explained in their relative contexts. And the reality of Divine Unity is what some of the greatest Sufis have confirmed, which is the erasure of humanness and the absoluteness of the Divine.

The Merit of Godfearingness

One should know that Godfearingness is the pivot of happiness, no edifice is ever correct unless it is built on it, and this is true with regard to all conventions. The locus of all kinds of happiness is the world to come, Allah Almighty says: *The issue ultimate is to the Godfearing*. The correct basis upon which to build works, so that they are perfected and accepted, is Godfearingness. Allah Almighty says: *God accepts only of the Godfearing*. All Sufis and the knowers of Allah maintain that the foundation referred to above, Godfearingness, is the foundation upon which no edifice will collapse through the succession of time, for it is the foundation of religion, and

the one who possesses it will keep rising in the meadows of mysteries and bliss as well as in the high grades of honour in the realm of majesty.

The outward and inward robes of Godfearingness are five godly and Muhammadan robes:

- The first robe is the attire of the limbs by means of compliance to commands and prohibition;
- The second robe is the attire of the hearts by means of the spiritual stations of repentance, scrupulousness, renunciation, steadfastness, indigence, gratitude, fear, hope, trust, contentment accompanied by veracity, constant heartbreak vis-à-vis Allah, being adorned with praiseworthy traits and shunning blameworthy ones;
- The third robe is the attire of the spirits through spiritual experiences, love, longing, awe, intimacy, contentment, closeness, gratitude, connection, arrival, extinction and subsistence;
- The fourth robe is the attire of the secrets through Unity, Unity and Oneness in the Divine Ipseity and the knowledge of Unity. And so these robes become the attire of the Perfect Man who is upon the Sacred Law, the Path and the Ultimate Spiritual Reality;
- The fifth robe is the attire of the secret of the secret that only Allah, exalted and glorified is He, can see. This is the greatest robe which is called the robe of singularity and which is adorned with pearls and jewels. Whoever is gifted this from the presence of the Lord of lords, glory be to Him,

acquires the secret of viceregency, the viceregency of Adam, peace be upon him, by learning the knowledge of the names, the Names of Allah and His Attributes, taught to him by Allah, in that He made Adam's entity and attributes equally a mirror receptive to the disclosure of Allah's attributes of beauty and majesty. As the Prophet ﷺ said: 'Allah created Adam and self-disclosed in him. Through self-disclosure he knew how to acquire His characteristics and appropriate His attributes.' This is the real secret of viceregency, for a mirror is a substitute of the one who is reflected in it.

The elite among all people are the people of faith; and the elite among the scholars are the Gnostics. The elite among the folk of gnosis are the wise ones who act with contentment, the folk of divine robes, even if their narrations are scarce, or they do not display their knowledge or are unknown amongst people. Through faith, safety from the Fire is obtained; through knowledge high degrees in the Garden are gained; through gnosis the Gnostics are drawn nigh to a sure abode; and through the intellect the Gnostics understand from Allah and are given leave to intercede. The Gnostics and Sufi masters say that one single cycle of prayer from a Gnostic is better than a thousand cycles of prayer performed by a scholar, and a single breath from the folk of the true reality of Divine Oneness is better than the works of all Gnostics and practising scholars.

Who is a Sufi?

A Sufi is the one who knows Allah, who places each thing in its rightful place, manages all states and moments through knowledge, assigns to people their rightful position and to Allah His rightful station, conceals what ought to be concealed and reveals what ought to be revealed, and puts matters in their appropriate positions with presence of mind, sound spiritual insight, perfect gnosis and due attention, genuineness and sincerity. These are the people of the Sacred Law, the Path and the Ultimate Spiritual Reality.

The People of Blame, the Qalandaris and the Difference between them

Among Sufi groupings there are those who are called the People of Blame (*malamatiyya*). The true person of blame possesses a noble spiritual state and a singular spiritual station; he holds firm to transmitted scriptures and is realized by sincerity and veracity. He has nothing to do with those who claim to be of the People of Blame but are really not of them, indulged as they are in the ways of libertinism, we seek refuge in Allah, and this is nothing but delusion.

There is another Sufi grouping called the Qalandaris (*al-Qalandariyya*). Again, the true Qalandari possesses a noble spiritual state. The difference between the true Qalandari and the person of blame is that the latter endeavours to conceal his acts of worship and holds fast to all the ways of goodness, believing that all merit lies in there, while hiding

his works and spiritual states. He pretends to be one of the generality of people in his demeanour, clothes, movements and matters in an attempt to conceal his state so that people do not take notice of him. Despite this concealment, he longs to achieve more and exerts all his effort in all that the servants use to get closer to Allah. The sign of the person of blame is that he does not harbour any harm towards his fellow Muslims nor does he display any good towards them.

The sign of the true Qalandari is that he does not confine himself to any one particular demeanour. He does not care about what people know or do not know of his state. He only relies on the goodness of hearts, which is his capital, by which I mean that his capital is the goodness of his heart vis-à-vis his Lord, but he does not follow the way of libertinism, which amounts to nothing but delusion.

Having a Good Opinion of a Believer is Part of his Inviolability

Imam ʿAbd Allah Ibn Asʿad al-Yafiʿi wrote in his book *Nashr al-Mahasin*:

> ʻ… And because of the inviolability of the believer, when clear-cut words of unbelief intentionally ensue from him, or he becomes an apostate, we seek refuge in Allah, his execution should not be hastened. Rather, he should be asked to repent, by way of obligation or preference, as there is a difference of opinion on this

point. So how about somebody who is not known to have intentionally pronounced words of unbelief, or whose words can be interpreted in different ways such that particularity and other things need to be proven? Forgetfulness and lapse of the tongue and other excuses are also likely in such cases. Hence, being absolutely certain of the case ought to be pursued. Imam Ghazali has declared that sparing a thousand people who deserve to be executed is less serious than spilling the equivalent of a cupping bowl of the believer's blood.'

Among the Sufis there is the one who likens himself to the genuine realized Sufi who has trodden the path, and there is the one who likens himself to the one who likens himself to the genuine realized Sufi who has trodden the path. The former is the one who is attached to their way, believes in the Sufi path and loves the real Sufis. The latter is the one who believes in the Sufi path and loves the real Sufis. And whoever loves a group of people becomes one of them. It is also reported in a rigorously authenticated Prophetic saying: 'A person is with those whom he loves.'[2]

[2] Narrated by Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi, Ahmad and others.

Treading the Sufi Path at the Beginning Leads to the Most Holy Presence

Due to treading the Sufi path in their beginning, they reached the most Holy Presence. I mean by this the Sufi folk who were meant to be Allah's elite and felicity was preeternally destined for them, so that the fire of volition resides in their illumined hearts and they burn with longing for the fire of proximity. Love tears them apart; they abandon convention; they reject ulterior motives in relation to sex, food, clothing, shelter, means of transportation and all kinds of the stuff of this world, just as they reject intimate friends and social status, the rejection of which is the most difficult of things. In fact, they reject everything other than Allah the Almighty, making Him their only quest. They quit sleep and avoid speech, their hearts ignited with the fire of divine love, which consumes their inwards. Then, they become disparate in their passionate love (*hawa*) and in their lifting of all conventions that may attract blame in accordance with the intensity of the fire within them. There are those in whom the fire of love rages and are disquieted by the sting of passionate love and disturbed by the agony of inward love (*jawa*). These have no fixed place of residence; rather they roam the wilderness and desolate regions. Some of them stay in ruins with thriving hearts; some seek, with living hearts, the neighbourhood of the deceased in graveyards. Some find companionship with the wild animals of the wilderness, some reflect on the ruinous nature of this world while others

take admonition from the dwellings of the dead.

It was said to one such person: 'From whence did you come?' He said: 'From this caravan which has just dismounted.' He was again asked: 'What did you say to them and what did they say to you?' He said: 'I asked them: "When are you leaving?" They answered: "When you arrive!"'

One Sufi was asked about his dwelling in graveyards and so he said: 'I stay near people who do not harm me when I am present with them or backbite me when I am absent!'

Another one was asked: 'Where do you live?' He said: 'In an abode where the noble and the lowly are equal.' They said: 'Where is this abode?' He said: 'The graveyards.' They asked him: 'Do you not feel estranged in the darkness of the night?' He said: 'The darkness of the night pales into insignificance when I summon to mind the darkness of the cavity of the tomb and the lonesomeness of the grave.' They said to him: 'You might see things in the graveyards that may alarm you?' He said: 'I might, but there is in the horror of the Afterlife that which occupies one from the graves.'

The Effect of the Heart on Soundness and Corruption

The following is an explanation of a sample of the knowledge of the heart, for it is a morsel whose soundness implies the soundness of the whole body and whose corruption implies the corruption of the whole body, as mentioned in the saying of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. The heart is called *qalb* in the Arabic language because of its swift changeableness

(*taqallub*) by the One who changes hearts, as stated by the Prophet: 'Indeed, hearts are between two fingers of the All-Merciful; He changes them as He wills.' And because Allah has created two realms in the heart of the believer, the spiritual and the physical realms, which are the spirit and the body, being the result of the combination of both, its form is therefore connected to the body while its spirit is connected to the spirit. The Prophet ﷺ referred to the physical and the spiritual realms with two fingers as being the two forms of the twin attributes of Allah's solicitude and rigour. It is mentioned in the Prophetic saying that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: 'Verily, hearts are between two fingers of the fingers of the All-Merciful: if He wills, He sets them straight and if He wills, He sends them astray.'[3] His saying '… if He wills, He set them straight', i.e., by being overwhelmed with the traits of spirituality that directs them to the Presence of Glory. And his saying: '… and if He wills, He sends them astray', i.e. through being overwhelmed by bestial traits in a way that makes them turn away from the Abidingly Real and incline towards this world and its lusts, thus fulfilling all their desires and quest for status. This is because it is the universal norm of Allah Almighty that he does not change what is in people until and unless they change what is in themselves, nor does He raise a servant unless the latter raises his works, as Allah Almighty says in the Qur'an: *And*

[3] Narrated by Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and Ahmad.

when Moses said to his people, 'O my people, why do you hurt me, though you know I am the Messenger of God to you?' When they swerved, God caused their hearts to swerve (*Al-Saff*, 61:5) from believing. Likewise, the uprightness of the heart is only through the fulfilment of the conditions of servanthood by cleansing the heart and directing it to ascend in the acquired stations by effort that prepares one for divinely gifted states which, in turn, bequeath suprasensible breaths that are finer and subtler than divinely gifted states. Breaths happen by refreshing the hearts with the subtleties of the unseen. The possessor of breaths is finer and purer than the possessor of spiritual states. The possessor of spiritual station and the 'moment' is a beginner, the possessor of breaths is someone who has reached the end of the spiritual journey, while the possessor of spiritual states lies between the two. States are intermediaries and breaths signal the end of spiritual ascent. The 'moments' are for the possessor of hearts, the spiritual states for the possessor of states, and breaths are for the folk of secrets.

The Gnostics are also unanimous that the best act of worship is the preservation of breaths vis-à-vis Allah. Their ins and outs have to be with the blessed Name of Allah, i.e., to say '*Allah*! *Allah*!', or with mentioning: *La ilaha Illa Llah*, which is the hidden invocation with which the lips do not move. I mean the best act of worship is the preservation of breaths with Allah: that is to say, the physical uvular breaths, such that their ins and outs are according to the best con-

tentment and remembrance. This is because they are the substance of works that yield gnosis, secrets and lights. This is considered to be of the spiritual stations. As for breaths, which are finer and purer than spiritual states, they are suprasensible, spiritual, divinely-gifted refreshments proceeding directly from Allah from the wellspring of, *He singles out for His mercy whom He will* (*Al-'Imran*, 3:74) and, *and We had taught him knowledge proceeding from Us* (*Al-Kahf*, 18:65). I mean they are bare through the witnessing and unveiling that come upon the arenas of hearts from the suprasensible realms to refresh the hearts so that they proceed towards the Changer of hearts. They are the finest points, the realities and the subtleties of the refreshment of the lover's heart who is also beloved, something which is derived from the wellspring of, *a people He loves, and who love Him* (*Al-Ma'ida*, 5:54); a heart that remains the secret of his spirit busily engaged in the presence of the Changer of hearts.

The Spiritual Stations of the Wayfarers and their Fruits

The following are ten spiritual stations that yield the gifts of ten spiritual states by the power of the Bestower.

The First Station: Repentance (*Tawba*)

The one who does not have repentance does not have any station. The master and Gnostic Dhu'l-Nun al-Misri was asked about the reason of his conversion to the Sufi path, so he said: 'I once left Cairo and walked through some roads. After a while I fell asleep and when I awoke and opened my eyes I saw a blind lark falling from a tree and lo! two utensils, one of gold and the other of silver, emerged from the ground, one containing sesame seeds and the other water. The lark ate from the one and drank from the other. At that point I said to myself: "This is enough for me." I therefore stood before the door [of Allah] until I was accepted.'

The Second Station: Scrupulousness (*Wara'*)

Shaykh Ibrahim ibn Adham travelled from Jerusalem to Basra to return one single date, whereas Abu Yazid al-Bistami travelled from Bistam to Hamadan to return an ant he found in some safflower he bought from there, explaining that he made it an exile from its birthplace.

The Third Station: Renunciation (*Zuhd*)

I mean the renunciation of that which is unlawful, which is an obligation upon each Muslim. It is reported that two of the kings of the Yemen of yesteryear waged war against one another. One of them had the upper hand on the other and so he killed him and dispersed his followers. The palace of the defeated king was embellished for the conqueror king, his throne was prepared for him and people waited on him to come and enter. As he was heading to his newly-acquired palace, a man known for his goodness intercepted him and read the following poetic verses:

> You shall heed eventful occurrences if you are judicious,
>
> For you are in them between one who prohibits and one who commands.
>
> How many a king on whom dust has been piled,
>
> Whereas he was just yesterday standing on pulpits.
>
> If you are in this world discerning, then
>
> Let your sufficiency in it be like the provision of a traveller.

If this world leaves a man with his religion intact,

Then what he misses of it is of no great harm.

The king said: ‘You are right!’ He dismounted his horse and climbed to the mountain, taking oaths from his entourage that no one would follow him. That was the last time he was seen, may Allah have mercy on him.

The Fourth Station: Steadfastness (*Sabr*)

It was related that a man was content with himself for staying awake at night and being steadfast in doing so, until this became a habit of his. He remained like this for quite a while, as Allah, glory be to Him, willed for him, until one night, overcome by sleep, he saw the Abidingly Real in a dream vision. From then on, he started forcing himself to sleep, and when he was asked about this, he said:

I saw the joy of my heart in my sleep,

And so, I love taking a breath and sleeping.

The Fifth Station: Indigence (*Faqr*)

One Sufi related the following: ‘We were in Asqalan. There was a young man who used to come and chat with us, and upon finishing he would stand up to pray. One day he came

to bid me farewell, saying that he wanted to travel to Alexandria. I gave him some money but he refused to take it. When I insisted, he threw a handful of sand in his small pot and mixed it with sea water and asked me to eat from it. And lo! it was a mush of wheat with a lot of sugar in it. Then he said: "One who is in this state and has the like of this does not need your money."'

Another man related the following: 'I saw the Day of Judgement as if it had taken place.' It was said: "Let Muhammad ibn Wasi' and Malik ibn Dinar enter the Garden." So I looked to see which one of them would go first and enter the Garden. When I saw that it was Muhammad ibn Wasi' who went first, I asked about the reason for this. I was told it was because Muhammad ibn Wasi' had one wrap while Malik ibn Dinar had two.'

The Sixth Station: Gratitude (*Shukr*)

The Gnostics state that gratitude is the acknowledgement of blessings with the tongue and the body's engagement in service. It is related that when the Prophet Idris, peace be upon him, was given the glad tiding of his forgiveness, he asked for perpetual life. When he was asked why he did so, he replied that it was in order to thank Allah, saying: 'For before I was working for the sake of forgiveness.' The angel spread his wings and he was carried to heaven.

The Seventh Station: Fear (*Khawf*)

When Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, may Allah be well pleased with him, breathed, the smell of roast liver used to emanate from him. One Sufi used to hearken to the marketplace whenever he was overwhelmed by fear in his retreat. He would remain there until he regained his composure and strength. I [i.e. the author of this treatise] would then give him leave to gather with others and keep their company. And indeed, people kept his company and benefitted from him. And in the same context, a Sufi used to ride his horse and go to his wife whenever he was overcome by spiritual state. Upon sleeping with his wife, he would quieten down.

The Eighth Station: Hope (*Raja'*)

Allah Almighty says: *Do not despair of God's mercy* (*Al-Zumar*, 39:53), and He says, glory be to Him: *And My mercy embraces all things* (*Al-A'raf*, 7:156). And in a report by Bukhari: 'My mercy has preceded My wrath.'

It is related that a jurist was one of the proxies of a judge. At the end of his life, he used to read the Qur'an and wipe with it over his face. After his death, a person saw him in his dream and asked him: 'What did Allah do with you?' The man said: 'He said to me: "O evil old man! You have come to Me with heinous sins!" And I said to Him: 'O my Lord! This is not what I heard about You.' He said: "What did you hear?" I said: 'Generosity!' And so Allah said: "Go, I have forgiven you."

The Ninth Station: Trust in Allah (*Tawakkul*)

Allah Almighty says: *And whosoever puts his trust in God, He shall suffice him* (*'al-Talaq*, 65:3). In explaining this verse, the scholars said: 'That is to say, trust in Allah is sufficient; it saves from all the worries of this world and the next, when one consigns his matters to Him.' Dhu'l-Nun al-Misri said: 'Trust in Allah means shunning the measures taken by the ego and throwing off one's power and might.'

The Tenth Station: Contentedness (*Rida*)

Allah Almighty says: *Allah being well pleased with them and they well pleased with Him* (*'al-Bayyina*, 98:8). And the Prophet ﷺ said: 'He has tasted the savour of faith him who is well pleased with Allah as Lord and with Islam as religion.'[4]

These, then, are the ten spiritual stations; there is nothing beyond them except the remembrance of the Sufi Shaykhs. The Sufi Shaykhs, may Allah be well pleased with them, maintain that the spiritual state is a meaning that occurs to the heart without an effort to summon or acquire it, such as joy, sadness, contractedness, elatedness, longing, distress, awe or agitation. Hence, spiritual states are gifted while spiritual stations are acquired. Spiritual states come from the very essence of Being while spiritual stations are the result of exerting an effort. The possessor of spiritual stations is made firm-footed in his stations, while the possessor of

[4] Narrated by Muslim, Ahmad and Tirmidhi.

spiritual states is made to ascend from spiritual station to another higher than it.

What Spiritual Stations and States Entail

Love is the basis upon which spiritual states are built, without which they are never sound. Likewise, repentance is the basis of all spiritual stations. Whoever does not have repentance does not have any spiritual stations; and whosoever does not have love does not have any spiritual states. Nonetheless, spiritual stations and states are built upon repentance and love only after the perfection of repentance and love. Whoever repents the kind of repentance encountered in a true servant, who possesses a genuine intention and sorrowful heart, such repentance will yield for him the love of Allah Almighty. This is a state that the servant will find in his heart and it defies any attempt at description. This state will drive him to exalt Allah and prefer His good-pleasure to anything else; he will feel that he cannot bear being without Him, and is unsettled and in constant agitation without Him, while finding intimate solace in remembering Him continuously with his heart.

Whoever consolidates the second station, the station of scrupulousness, with a truthful and sorrowful heart, this will yield for him the gifted state of longing. Longing, according to some Sufis, is the burning of the inside and the searing of the interior. And according to others, it is the repose of the hearts through ecstasy and the love of encounter through

proximity.

And whoever consolidates the third station, renunciation, with a truthful and sorrowful heart, this will yield for him the gifted state of awe, which is the ego's humbleness and submission upon the appearance of the sign of majesty and grandeur.

And whoever consolidates the fourth station, steadfastness, with a truthful and sorrowful heart, this will yield for him the gifted state of intimacy. Intimacy, according to the Sufis, is the lifting of reserve with the presence of awe. The sign of intimacy with Allah is that as intimacy increases, the more love and awe increase.

And whoever consolidates the fifth station, indigence, with a truthful and sorrowful heart, this will yield for him the gifted state of proximity. Allah the Almighty says in the Qur'an: *and bow thyself, and draw nigh* (*Al-'Alaq*, 96:19). This proximity refers to the proximity of the servant first with his faith and assent, and then with his state of excellence and realisation. It also refers to the proximity of the Abidingly Real to the servant through the gnosis that He specifically grants him in this world, and the witnessing and beholding with which He will honour him in the Afterlife, just as it refers to the different kinds of solicitude and favour that lie between being gifted gnosis in this world and being honoured with witnessing and beholding in the world to come.

And whoever consolidates the sixth station, gratitude, with a truthful and sorrowful heart, this will yield for him

the gifted state of diffidence, which is the presence of awe in the heart with the feeling of estrangement due to what has ensued from the servant vis-à-vis his Lord.

And whoever consolidates the seventh station, fear, with a truthful and sorrowful heart, this will yield for him the gifted state of drunkenness which is, according to the Sufis, the dominance of the power of spiritual state.

And whoever consolidates the eighth station, hope, with a truthful and sorrowful heart, this will yield for him the gifted state of arrival. According to the Sufis, the arrived servant is the one who does not see anyone or anything except his Creator and no thought, other than the thought of his Fashioner, connects to his inmost secret. This is the servant whose only concern is Allah, his preoccupation is about Allah and his return is to Allah. According to some Sufis, the disclosures of the hearts are through the witnessing of secrets. The arrived servant is the one whom the Abidingly Real does not veil from anything.

And whoever consolidates the ninth station, trust in Allah and Divine Oneness, with a truthful and sorrowful heart, this will yield for him the gifted state of extinction. According to the Sufis, extinction is the repudiation of blameworthy character traits. The Sufi masters maintain that extinction amounts to absence from things like the extinction of our master Moses, peace be upon, when his Lord disclosed Himself to the mountain.

And whoever consolidates the tenth station, contented-

ness, with a truthful and sorrowful heart, this will yield for him the gifted state of subsistence. According to the Sufis, subsistence refers to the subsistence of praiseworthy character traits after the extinction of blameworthy character traits. The Sufi Gnostics state that the possessor of subsistence is the one who has reached a station whereby the Abidingly Real does not veil from the created beings nor do created beings veil him from the Abidingly Real, in contrast to extinction whose possessor is completely absorbed in the Abidingly Real and, thus, he is veiled from created beings.

We now proceed to the exposition of the knowledge of spiritual wayfaring by means of the stations of the hearts and also through the ways, which are three in number: the Sacred Law, the Path and the Ultimate Spiritual Reality.

The Definition of the Sacred Law, the Path and the Ultimate Spiritual Reality

According to the Sufi folk, the Sacred Law is like a ship, the Path is like the sea and the Ultimate Spiritual Reality is like the pearls in the bottom of the sea. Whoever wants to get to the pearls has to embark on the ship and sail in the sea, which will lead him to the pearls. Whoever discards this arrangement will never reach to the pearls of the sea.

The first thing that is incumbent upon the spiritual seeker is the Sacred Law. What is meant by the Sacred Law is whatever is enjoined by Allah and His Messenger, such as ritual ablution, the performance of the prayer, fasting, the poor-

due, the pilgrimage, seeking what is lawful and shunning what is unlawful, and observing all other commands and prohibitions. A man should beautify his outward with the raiment of the Sacred Law such that the light of the outward of the Sacred Law is in his heart. He should remove from his heart the darkness of humanness so that it is consolidated for the path and the light of the Sacred Law descends into his heart.

The Path is holding fast to Godfearingness and that which brings one close to the Master in terms of traversing spiritual halting-places and stations. Thus, each spiritual station has a path and the paths of Sufi masters are different. Each Sufi master has founded his path in accordance with that which he is upon. The path of some of them consists of sitting with people and disciplining them. The path of others consists of abundant prayers and fasting as well as other acts of worship. Yet, there are also others whose path consists of serving the people by carrying on their backs firewood and grass, selling them in the marketplace and giving their price to charity. Thus, each Sufi master chooses his own path.

As for Ultimate Spiritual Reality, it is tantamount to reaching the goal and contemplating the light of self-disclosure, as the Prophet ﷺ said to Haritha: '… Every truth has its reality, so what is the reality of your faith?' Haritha responded by saying: 'I discarded this world, and so its stones, mud, gold and silver are equal in my eyes; I fast the day and stay

awake at night…'[5] Thus, his holding fast to the religion of Allah and obeying His command is the Sacred Law; opting for strictness and that which is more precautionary, through staying awake at night, fasting and shunning desired things is the path; whereas the revelation of the events of the Afterlife is the ultimate spiritual reality.

The Definition of 'the Moment' (*al-Waqt*) According to the Sufis

By 'the moment' the Sufis mean the state in which one is in presently. If a man is in a state of happiness, then his moment is one of happiness, and if he is in a state of sadness, his moment is one of sadness. The Sufi Gnostics proclaim that the Sufi is 'the son of his moment', which means that he occupies himself only with that by which he is addressed presently of the rulings of Allah the Almighty. His heart is not attached to the past or to the future, for the present moment would pass if he were to occupy himself with either the past or the future. Taking care of the present moment is more appropriate, for he is legally responsible vis-à-vis the present moment rather than any other time. The Sufi is also according to the ruling of his present moment, i.e. he is resigned vis-à-vis that which occurs to him in his moment of the decree and destiny of Allah the Almighty. The Gnostics

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5 Narrated by Tabarani, 'Abd al-Raziq, Ibn 'Asakir, Abu Nu'aym and others.

state that 'the present moment' is a sharp-cutting sword, just as what is decreed by Allah in the servant's present moment cuts through him like a sharp sword; it cannot possibly not befall him.

The Distinction between Spiritual Stations (*Maqamat*) and Halting-Places (*Manazil*)

The spiritual halting-places are diverse, the first of which is complying with Divine commands and shunning prohibitions, and the last is knowing the defects of the ego and cleansing it from what is considered blameworthy defects in the eyes of Allah. The defects of the ego are numerous, the worst of which is man's exultation in the acts of worship he performs. Likewise, spiritual halting-places are too many to be enumerated. The condition for the spiritual wayfarer is that he does not proceed to the next spiritual station until he perfects the one before it. If he leaves a station before giving it its right due, he will be like a sick person who swallows a laxative mixture before mixing it well; instead of helping him, it will make him worse.

The Definition of the Spiritual State According to the Sufis

A state is that which descends upon the heart of joy, contraction, elation, longing, experiential tasting, etc. The Gnostics state that a spiritual state is like lightning, i.e., it vanishes before long. If it persists with a person, then it is not a spiri-

tual state but the discourse of the ego.

Of the Spiritual States: Contraction (*Qabd*) and Elation (*Bast*)

Contraction and elation resemble fear and hope. However, fear and hope are acquired; by which I mean they belong to spiritual stations. Contraction and elation, on the other hand, are gifted. Nonetheless, fear and hope are for the common people as well as for the elite, whereas contraction and elation are particularly for the elite. This is because contraction and elation are spiritual states which are gifted rather than acquired. Moreover, contraction and elation occur in the present moment.

The true nature of contraction is the advent of something upon the servant's heart from Allah Almighty, which points to remissness and the deserving of grounding because of this remissness. Elation, on the other hand, is the advent of something on the servant's heart from Allah Almighty which points to solicitude, appreciation and honouring. It may also be the case that the servant does not know the cause of his contraction or elation. In such a case, he should simply consign his matter to Allah until they pass.

Of the Spiritual States: Awe (*Hayba*) and Intimacy (*Uns*)

Awe resembles contraction except that it is more intense, such that the insight that comes to the heart of the servant

from Allah Almighty carries a greater threat and rebuke. Likewise, intimacy resembles elation except that it is stronger; the insight that the servant receives from Allah Almighty is stronger in its allusion to Allah's care and indulgence.

Of the Spiritual States: Feigning Ecstasy (*Tawajud*) and Ecstasy (*Wajd*)

Feigning ecstasy is the servant's display of ecstasy, and his attempt to bring about ecstasy in himself, as the Prophet ﷺ said: 'Weep! And if you cannot weep, then feign weeping.'[6] As for ecstasy, it is that which comes to the heart without any effort. Ecstasy is of the fruits of one's litanies; the greater one's litanies of acts of worship, the greater is one's ecstasy.

Of the Spiritual States: Ecstatic Finding (*Wujud*)

Finding is tantamount to the affirmation of the power of ultimate spiritual reality in a person's heart. This does not happen except after the disappearance of human traits such as heedlessness and lust. Whoever loves anything other than Allah Almighty has contradicted ultimate spiritual reality. Finding is commensurate with effort. The possessor of finding has sobriety and erasure. The state of his sobriety is his subsistence through the Abidingly Real, whereas the state of his erasure is his extinction in the Abidingly Real. These two states alternate on him. When finding overcomes a servant,

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6 Narrated by Ibn Majah in his Sunan.

he becomes as the Prophet ﷺ said relating the words of Allah glorified and exalted is He: '… through Me he hears and by means of Me he sees.'

Of the Spiritual States: Gatheredness (*Jam'*), Individuatedness (*Farq*), the Gatheredness of Ghatheredness (*Jam' al-Jam'*) and the Second Individuatedness (*al-Farq al-Thani*)

As for gatheredness, it is what proceeds from the part of Allah Almighty in terms of displaying an understanding or a meaning in the heart of a servant and the onset of solicitude and success for him. Individuatedness, on the other hand, is what proceeds from the servant in terms of discharging his servanthood and calling upon his Maker. The servant must have both gatheredness and individuatedness, for the one without individuatedness is without servanthood, and the one without gatheredness is without gnosis. The words of Allah Almighty, *Thee only we serve*, refers to individuatedness, and His words, *to Thee alone we pray for succour*, (*Al-Fatiha*, 1:5) refers to gatheredness. When the servant addresses his Lord with the tongue of entreaty, either asking for something, supplicating, showing gratitude or beseeching, he does so from a position of individuatedness. And when the servant's secret is purely directed to entreating his Lord and requesting Him to save him regarding all that with which He addresses him of command or prohibition, the servant is then in a position of gatheredness.

As for the gatheredness of gatheredness, it refers to total consumption, i.e. from other than Allah Almighty. In the position of the gatheredness of gatheredness the servant sees that worship is for Allah, i.e., with Allah's given success.

As for the second individuatedness, it is the return of the servant from the state of erasure to sobriety at the due time of the performance of obligations so that he can perform them, which is an act of solicitude from Allah Almighty.

Of the Spiritual States: Extinction (*Fana'*) and Subsistence (*Baqa'*)

Extinction means the removal of blameworthy character traits from the servant, whereas subsistence means the remaining and affirmation of praiseworthy character traits in him. Spiritual wayfarers are disparate in their extinction and subsistence. Some of them are extinguished vis-à-vis their lusts by the extinction of what they lust for of this world. When their lusts are extinguished, their good intention and sincerity in worship remain. Whoever is extinguished vis-à-vis blameworthy character traits, like resentful envy, rancour, arrogance, etc., subsists by means of penitence and truthfulness. Praiseworthy character traits and blameworthy ones are opposites, if one is extinguished vis-à-vis the ones, one subsists by means of their opposites.

Of the Spiritual States: Absence (*Ghayba*) and Presence (*Hudur*)

Absence is the absence of the servant from the vicissitudes of this world, whereas presence refers to the servant's presence of mind with regard to the matters of the Afterlife. A servant may also be present through unveiling and his entreaty with Allah Almighty, such that he loses his consciousness of himself to the extent that if he were to place his hand in fire, he would not feel its burning pain.

Of the Spiritual States: Drunkenness (*Sukr*) and Sobriety (*Sahw*)

Drunkenness resembles absence, while sobriety is the servant's return from the state of drunkenness to his usual consciousness. Absence is for both the beginners in spiritual wayfaring as well as for those at its end. Drunkenness, on the other hand, is only for those of spiritual rapture. An insight comes from Allah to the heart of one of them and renders him drunk. When description of the state is revealed to the servant, drunkenness ensues, his spirit becomes overjoyed and his heart loses itself.

Of the Spiritual States: Tasting (*Dhawq*) and Drinking (*Shurb*)

By tasting and drinking the Sufis refer to that which they experience of the fruits of self-disclosure and the results of unveilings. This starts with tasting, then drinking and then

quenching one's thirst. The purity of their dealings entails for them the experience of meanings, and the purity of their con-descendence (*munazalat*) imply for them drinking, whereas their permanent continuances entail the quenching of their thirst. The possessor of the state of tasting feigns drunkenness, i.e., he is at the commencement of his inebriation; the possessor of the state of drinking is drunk; whereas the possessor of the state of the quenching of thirst is sober. The three can be likened to a thirsty person: the person who is thirsty just a little is a possessor of taste; the one who is very thirsty is a possessor of drinking. But when he quenches his thirst, he no longer worries about his thirst nor is he keen to drink. Such a person is sober.

Of the Spiritual States: Erasure (*Mahw*) and Affirmation (*Ithbat*)

Erasure is the lifting of conventions, whereas affirmation is the establishment of the rulings of the acts of worship. Erasure is of two kinds: the erasure of the servant from phenomena; and the erasure of heedlessness. Likewise, affirmation is of two kinds: the affirmation of con-desendences and the affirmation of continuations. Obliteration (*mahq*) resembles erasure, except that the former is above the latter, for erasure leaves traces behind while obliteration does not.

Of Spiritual States: Concealment (*Sitr*) and Disclosure (*Tajalli*)

Disclosure is a light and unveiling from Allah that manifests in the heart of the Gnostic, burning him thereof and making him bewildered. Concealment is the departure of this disclosure from him, so that the Gnostic is not completely consumed by the burning or disintegrated in the light of disclosure: a light from Him, a favour and an act of drawing close.

Of the Spiritual States: Utter Presence (*Muhadara*), Unveiling (*Mukashafa*) and Witnessing (*Mushahada*)

The three are in gradual succession: utter presence, followed by unveiling and then witnessing. Utter presence refers to the presence of the heart, and it could also be through the continuous manifestation of [the divine] proof, which remains beyond concealment, even if it can be readily recalled by the dominance of the power of remembrance. After it comes unveiling, which is presence with clear proof, in which case one needs not reflect on the divine proof or seek the path. Then comes witnessing, which is the finding of the Abidingly Real that leaves no room for bewilderment. So when the horizon of the inmost secret is clear of the clouds of concealment, the sun of witnessing begins to rise from the sign of spiritual assent.

Of the Spiritual States: Glimmers (*Lawa'ih*), Dawnings (*Lawami'*) and Flashes (*Tawali'*)

The first to manifest are glimmers, followed by dawnings and then by flashes. Glimmers are like lightning: they manifest and vanish quickly. Dawnings are glimmers but last slightly longer than them: they persist for two or three instances. Flashes last longer than both glimmers and dawnings, and their power is stronger just as they are more efficient in removing darkness.

Of the Spiritual States: Unexpected Raids (*Bawadih*) and Attack (*Hujum*)

An unexpected raid is that which surprises the heart from the Unseen, leaving it stymied, and it brings either joy or distress. Attack is that which comes down on the heart due to the power of the moment without any effort from the servant. Its different kinds vary depending on the strength or weakness of the spiritual insight that comes to the heart.

Of the Spiritual States: Variegation (*Talwin*) and Firm-footedness (*Tamkin*)

Variegation is the trait of the possessors of spiritual states, whereas firm-footedness is the quality of the folk of spiritual verities. As long as the servant is in the path, he remains a possessor of variegation, for he keeps rising from state to state. Firm-footedness happens when the spiritual wayfarer reaches his quest. When he reaches his quest, he disembarks

and remains settled in his state, as it is a state unlike any state reached before it: it is the state of the disappearance of humanness and the subsistence of ultimate spiritual reality.

Of the Spiritual States: Proximity (*Qurb*) and Remoteness (*Bu'd*)

Proximity refers to the proximity of the servant from Allah Almighty by means of acts of obedience and ascending from one spiritual halting-place to another. Remoteness refers to the servant's distance from Allah and finding solace in contravening Him: the former is remoteness from Allah while the latter is remoteness from spiritual realisation.

Of the Spiritual States: Breaths (*Anfas*)

The reference here is to luminous breaths, which are the refreshment of hearts by means of the subtleties of the Unseen. The possessor of breaths is finer and purer than the possessor of spiritual states. The possessor of 'the moment' is a beginner; the possessor of breaths is at the end of the spiritual path; while the possessor of spiritual states is between the two. Spiritual states are intermediaries while breaths are for the folk of inmost secrets. The Sufi masters state that the Gnostics cannot be spared a breath for no respite is given to them. The lover, on the other hand, has to have a breath, for without it he would disintegrate due to his lack of strength.

Of the Spiritual States: The Knowledge of Motivating Thoughts (*Khawatir*)

A motivating thought is an address that comes to the consciences. It could happen by the casting of an angel or by the devil, just as it could happen due to mere discourses of the ego or may come from Allah, exalted and glorified is He. If it is from an angel, it is an inspiration; if it is from the devil, it is a mere devilish whispering; if it is from the ego, it is a prompting; and if it is from Allah, exalted and glorified is He, it is a motivating thought.

Of the Spiritual States: The Knowledge of Certainty, the eye of Certainty and the Truth of Certainty

According to Sufi nomenclature, the knowledge of certainty is through presentation of proof; the eye of certainty is gained through clear evidence; and the truth of certainty is possible through direct beholding. The knowledge of certainty is for the possessors of reasoning faculties, the eye of certainty is for the possessors of different disciplines of knowledge, and the Truth of certainty is for the possessors of gnosis.

Of the Spiritual States: The Spiritual Insight (*Warid*)

A spiritual insight is that which occurs to the hearts of praiseworthy motivating thoughts as well as of things that the servant does not have previous knowledge of. Even if it does not belong to motivating thoughts, it can be still be

considered a spiritual insight from the Abidingly Real, exalted and glorified is He, or from knowledge. Thus, spiritual insights are more general than motivating thoughts, for the latter are specific to the source of the address and that which contains its meaning, while spiritual insights are either insights of happiness, sadness, contraction, elation, or any other meaning.

Of the Spiritual States: The Utterance of Witness

The utterance of witness is that which is on the heart of the person, i.e. that which is predominant in him. If it is remembrance, then he is a witness of remembrance; if knowledge is predominant in him, then he is a witness of knowledge. If, on the other hand, ecstasy is predominant in him, he is then a witness of ecstasy. The meaning of 'witness' is 'that which is present'; anything that is present in one's heart is its witness.

Of the Spiritual States: The Knowledge of the Contented Soul, the Reproachful Soul and the Soul that Incites to Evil

The contented soul is the soul that is content with obedience to Allah Almighty and does not seek to contravene His command. The reproachful soul is the soul that reproaches the person for committing sins and drives him to repent and relent. The soul that incites to evil is the soul that commands bad things. It is this soul that ruins its possessor and is the

greatest veil between the servant and his Lord.

The Sufis have been asked about the healing of the ego, and they have unanimously answered that its healing lies in contravening it. By the ego, the Sufis mean what is in the servant of blameworthy character traits and attributes. The ugliest of these blameworthy traits is its conceitedness and its delusion that it is worth something in the eyes of Allah and the eyes of people. It is also likely that the soul is not the very essence of blameworthy character traits and attributes but rather a subtlety deposited in this heart, which is the locus of praiseworthy character traits.

Of the Spiritual States: The Spirit

There is disagreement among the folk of ultimate spiritual reality from amongst the people of the Sunna concerning the spirit. Some of them state that the spirit is a metaphorical subtle body, while the lordly spirit belongs to the World of the Divine Command. The Sufi masters state that the spirits are subtle substances deposited in bodies, which can rise in the state of sleeping and leave these bodies. Mankind is spirit and body, for Allah, exalted and glorified is He, has made them subservient to each other. The Mustering, on the Day of Judgement, as well as reward and punishment cover both the spirit and body. Spirits are created, but whoever claims that they are perishable committed a grave error. The spirit is the source of goodness while the ego is the source of evil. Reason is the legion of the spirit, whereas caprice is

the legion of the ego. Success is from Allah and is due to the spirit, whilst being God-forsaken is due to the ego.

Of the Spiritual States: The Knowledge of the Secrets

This includes the knowledge of the secret and the secret of the secret. The secret, like the spirits, is a subtlety deposited in the heart. It is the locus of contemplation, just as the spirits are the loci of love and the hearts the loci of gnosis.

The Sufi Gnostics maintain that the servant cannot glance at the secret, and only the Abidingly Real knows the secret of the secret. Moreover, the secret is nobler than the spirit while the spirit is nobler than the heart. The Sufis also say: 'The breasts of noblemen are the graveyards of secrets', and Allah knows best.

The Spiritual Openings of those at the End of the Spiritual Path

The Spiritual Openings of those at the end of the Spiritual Path, like subsistence, extinction and perpetual encounter with the Divine, entail that those who experience them engage continuously in the remembrance of the Divine after extinguishing their own acts in the acts of their Lord, by adhering to the Sacred Law, and their attributes in His attributes, by following the spiritual path. They persist in this until the heart is crystallized by the light of remembrance and it knows remembrance from the dress of its letters and sounds, whose light reflects on the heart's mirror which is wiped

clean of the attributes of humanness. Then it infiltrates into the spirit and it becomes crystallised by remembrance, and remembrance and the One who is remembered become as one. Remembrance is thenceforth the remembrance of the Essence. At this point, the parts of the existents become illumined by the light of the spirit's remembrance, for it encompasses all of them, and they remember Allah with it. Then, *To Him good words go up, and the righteous deed – He uplifts it* (*Fatir*, 35:10).

The goodly remembrance is that which is not motivated by any worldly or otherworldly reasons. It is sincerely for Allah whereby the servant makes remembrance by spending his own being on Him and also by being extinguished in Him through coming face to face with ultimate spiritual reality in accordance with the reality of Allah's words, *So remember Me,* such that He makes him subsistent through Him in accordance with His words, *and I will remember you* (*Al-Baqarah*, 2:152). '*And I will remember you*' is tantamount to the self-disclosure of Allah's beauty described by that which He is remembered through the invoker's act of remembrance, so that He makes him extinguished from this act and subsistent through His remembrance of him. Then there is erasure that obliterates what the servant encounters of the self-disclosure of the attributes of rigour. Whosoever is extinguished from his own acts will subsist through the acts of Allah. And whoever is extinguished from his own attributes will subsist through the attributes of Allah Al-

mighty. And whoever is extinguished from his own entity will subsist through the Entity of Allah exalted is He. One Sufi poet said:

> There are those who are lost in desolate lands,
>
> And there are those who are lost in the arena of His love;
>
> These are made extinguished, and then again and again are made extinguished,
>
> And then they are made to subsist by being near their Lord.

Thus, the first extinction, as the Sufis proclaim, is the servant's extinction of his own attributes due to the subsistence of the attributes of the Abidingly Real. The second extinction is the servant's extinction of the attributes of the Abidingly Real through his contemplation of the Abidingly Real. The third extinction is the servant's extinction of witnessing his own extinction through his utter absorption in the being of the Abidingly Real. The latter is what is called, the extinction of the entity in the Entity, which is the real meaning of, *Say: 'God.' Then leave them alone, playing their game of plunging* (*Al-An'am*, 6:91).

The Invoker's Arrival to the Realm of Extinction

The knowers of Allah state that when the person who makes remembrance of Allah arrives to the realm of extinction, he becomes connected to the disposal of the Abidingly Real in him. The state of remembrance, then, becomes a priceless elixir, and his good qualities turn into pure gold. The lights of divine transcendence and Unity deposited in him then negate all associationism, the likeness to created beings, and the denial of attributes or misrepresentation. Through the attributes of Unity, he is then purified from blameworthy traits and cleansed from contraventions. At that point he joins the cluster of spiritual wayfarers and proceeds through the halting-places of the spiritual travellers until he reaches the status of those who fly to tranquillity and quietude, *Those who believe, their hearts being at rest in God's remembrance -- in God's remembrance are at rest the hearts* (*Al-Ra'd*, 13:28).

The Invoker's Arrival to the Essence of the Realm of the Spirit

When the person who makes remembrance of Allah arrives to the essence of the realm of the spirit, the quality of beginningless eternality appears to him, as a mention of a particular instance of a general statement which does mean the qualification of the general statement (*tansis al-takhsis*), and also by virtue of the edict of being given honour, which is under the ascription of *and breathed My spirit in him* (*Al-Hijr*, 15:29). This is the favour of ascribing the Beginninglessly

Eternal to contingent beings, and it is also the glorification of the Beginninglessly Eternal who creates contingent beings. This particularity and favouring has almost obliterated from the contingent the character of contingency. Just as this honouring has almost connected the Beginninglessly Eternal to the contingent. It is almost as if, through this ascription, the Beginninglessly Eternal is proven through that which is contingent. And so it is made clear that beginningless eternality is far transcendent above contingency and that the Beginninglessly Eternal is far transcendent above that which is contingent. Likewise, beginninglessness is transcendent above connection and disconnection. The servant's ascription to Allah is an ascription of favour, not a particular attribution; the servant's attribution to Allah is one of selection and not a partitive attribution. It is an attribution of proximity, not an attribution of relation; one of honouring, not beginninglessness. Allah is far transcendent above any literal attribution, even if He says: *and breathed My spirit in him*.

Glory Be to Him '*Like Him there is Naught*'

Allah does not have a whole such that it can be said that He has a part; He does not have a genus such that it can be said that He has a species; He does not have an abode such that it can be said 'He is above'. Allah is far transcendent above having a beginning, an end, an extremity or locality, *Like Him there is naught* (*Al-Shura*, 42:11).

The Invoker's Arrival to the Realm of the Secret

When the invoker arrives to the realm of the secret, the mysteries of the Unseen will be revealed to him and the virgin brides of mysteries will be brought to him in procession to his retreats, 'My friends are under My edifices, no one knows them except Me.' He shall sit at the banquets of, *then revealed to His servant that He revealed* (*Al-Najm*, 53:10), in an exclusive assembly between him and his Lord. In him will then be confided a secret that no emissary prophet or close angel shall know. Then the solicitudes of divine power will bring to him the exquisite gifts of the Divine Presence that no eyes have seen and no ears have ever heard of, *No soul knows what comfort is laid up for them secretly* (*Al-Sajdah*, 32:17). Does one know where the comfort of the lover lies? It lies in beholding the Countenance of the Beloved and finding joy in looking at the beauty of His majesty; The Beloved who will carve a hearing in the servant's heart and sight in his intellect, such that he hears without ears and sees without eyes; he hears only from the Unseen and sees only from the Unseen. The Unseen, to him, becomes face-to-face seeing, and that which people hear about only by report becomes visible to him. This is the meaning of the Sufi saying: 'My heart saw my Lord.'

The knowers of Allah maintain that the indication of beginninglessness is found in the text of the Noble Qur'an, *Hast thou not regarded thy Lord?* (*Al-Furqan*, 25:45). Thenceforth, He will distance the one who makes remembrance

from himself and divest him of his ego, and so he falls in the divine grip and is taken to the highest degrees of Unity. Gnosis is in the highest abodes of the secret and aspirations. There is there what words cannot possibly describe, and to which the secrets are incapable of alluding. This is the very limit of where one can go; there is nothing beyond the end; 'Far transcendent You are, I cannot praise You as You have praised Yourself.' The servant will then say: 'Far transcendent is He who has left for His created beings no way of knowing Him except their incapacity to know Him.'

And when the Abidingly Real knew the incapacity of the servant to give His due right with regard to His unicity and singularity, He bore testimony for Himself truthfully for the sake of the truth, *God bears witness that there is no god but He* (*Al-'Imran*, 3:18). The reality of Divine Unity is the starting-point as it is the end; and the end is nothing but returning to the beginning. From Him it all began and to Him it shall all return. The expression, 'there is no god except Allah', is the beginning and end, from Him it began and to Him it shall return, for it is the goodly expression.

Of the Mysteries of Remembrance

The unveilings that come to the hearts are through, 'there is no god except Allah'. The unveilings of the spirits are through the invocation, *Allah, Allah*. And the unveilings of the secrets are through the invocation, *Hu, Hu* [He, He]. 'There is no god except Allah' is the power of the hearts; the

invocation, *Allah, Allah*, is the power of the spirits; and the invocation, *Hu, Hu*, is the power of the secrets. 'There is no god except Allah' is the magnet of the hearts; '*Allah, Allah*' is the magnet of the spirits; and '*Hu, Hu*' is the magnet of both the secrets and the hearts. The spirit is like a pearl within a shell inside a container; or like a bird in a cage inside a house. The shell and the cage are representations of the spirit, while the pearl and the bird are representations of the secret. Whoever does not get to the house first will not get to the cage; and as long as one does not get to the cage, he cannot get to the bird. Likewise, as long as one does not reach the heart, one will not reach the spirit; and as long as one does not reach the spirit, one will not reach the secret. If one reaches to the house, one reaches the realm of the hearts; if one reaches the cage, one reaches the realm of the spirits; and if one reaches to the bird, one reaches the realm of the secrets. So open the gate of your heart with the key of 'there is no god but Allah', and the gate of your spirit with the key of your saying, *Allah, Allah*; and bring down the bird of your secret with the safflower of your saying, *Hu, Hu*. This is because your saying, *Hu*, empowers this bird. This is what is alluded to in the saying of Allah to His Prophet Moses, peace be upon him: 'Make Me in the stead of your food and drink.'

The Unity of the Elite of the Elite

The following is on the reality of the realm of Divine Unity, which is built on singularity after discharging the right of

divestment. The latter refers to being singularized by the Abidingly Real by means of His singularity when the grip of remembrance overwhelms the servant such that it comes out from the layers of the letters and the sound he makes in his remembrance. With one swipe the remainder of the servant that makes remembrance as well as what remains of his affirmation are extinguished. The One who is remembered is affirmed above remembrance through the perpetuity of remembrance in accordance with His saying, *So remember Me, and I will remember you* (*Al-Baqarah*, 2:152), and so at that point the invoker becomes invoked and the invoked an invoker. Nonetheless, the servant will never become the Lord nor will the Lord become the servant. The 'where' is then replaced with the very essence, otherness with direct beholding, and duality with unicity. The servant will thus be totally extinguished from his own self as from others in the very essence of the gatheredness of totality, contemplating the real ultimate Essence which is absolutely far transcendent above subtle or dense corporeality or its concomitants. Hence, he sees nothing and no one but the One, first and last, outwardly and inwardly, *Like Him there is naught; He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing* (*Al-Shura*, 42:11). This is the unity of the elite of the elite.

On the Knowledge of the Folk of Special Contemplation

The reality of the Gnostic is that he is a wayfarer and a flier. Wayfaring then takes flying as its guide. Wayfaring is through the stations of the contented soul while flying is through the highest spiritual stations. Then flying takes as its guide secret raptures. Rapture takes him away from his relenting and brings him closer to his ipseity, until rapture bequeaths contemplation. Contemplation makes him present with his Lord and absent from himself until he has direct vision. Direct vision obliterates him and the eye blots him out. Then the Abidingly Real gives him the upper hand and his falsehoods are erased. The lights of the mystery of mysteries are then revealed to him, and so he has a glimpse of the mysteries of the World of Dominion and those of the World of Absolute Power. He will then be lost in the maze of utter might and power until the sun of lordship is disclosed to him in the sky of slavehood, and the human earth is illumined by the light of its Lord. He will rise in stations until he reaches the shining of the light of Godhood that is derived from Allah Almighty, *God is the Light of the heavens and the earth* (*Al-Nur*, 24:35). Then he will receive the breeze of divine solicitudes, and in the very essence of the sun, the door of Ipseity opens up, and the plungers immerse themselves in it. At this point, do not ask any question!

Indeed, what happened happened and I will not utter

a word about it,

Have a good opinion and don't ask about the event.

And then all the parts of the body are illumined by the light of the Sacred Law; the niche of the soul manifests the dawnings of the Path; while the glass bottle of the heart is illumined by the lights of the spiritual reality and the lamp of the spirit is lighted up by the fire of the light of the Divinity. The tree of unicity then appears and the Moses of secret is called, *Moses, I am God, the Lord of all Being*. The six directions are then erased, the forms vanish, parts are blotted out, particulars turn to naught, and the might of unicity shines forth by the disclosure of the lordly, ultimate light. The mountain of humanity and spirituality is torn asunder, and otherness is set ablaze by the fire of otherness. Partnership is lifted and Oneness remains; Allah showing His mightiness by wearing the cloak of Immensity and Might and by being clothed with the garment of Exaltation and Grandeur, alone without any partners, *All things perish, except His Face. His is the Judgment, and unto Him you shall be returned* (*Al-Qasas*, 28:88). Moreover, *and when thou threwest, it was not thyself that threw, but God threw* (*Al-Anfal*, 8:17) which is at the time of, *nor speaks he out of caprice* (*Al-Najm*, 53:3). This is the mystery of 'I am for him hearing, sight and tongue; Through Me he hears, through Me he sees and through Me he speaks.' If I only knew, this is the state of the one to whom is revealed

the mysteries of 'I was a hidden treasure.' So when the covering is lifted, disaffection disappears and the encounter lasts, then: *His heart lies not of what he saw* (*Al-Najm*, 53:11), nor is the heart sent away. Instead, it grazes in the meadows of gnosis, drinks from the fountains of love, and is quenched by the goblet of beauty, which is filled with the drink of majesty from the ocean of communion. It is then spared from the embattlements of hearsay, excessive questions and the changing of vicissitudes, since it has turned away from that which is absolutely encompassed by the mystery of mysteries and turned towards the One who absolutely encompasses everything and, thus, it achieves, *Does He not encompass everything?* (*Fussilat*, 41:54)

The Truth is plain, there is nothing hidden about it,

The secret has been divulged and the veil lifted.

My soul shall perish and the spirit is calling,

Neither pride nor purity remain.

The subsistence of the Abidingly Real extinguished us and so,

The subsistence of our extinction has extinguished that subsistence.

The sway of the Absolute Power became manifest to the extent

That we became extinguished and extinction itself was extinguished.

This is the station of real contemplation with which the Lord is known. The Prophet ﷺ said: 'I have known my Lord; and had it not been for the favour of my Lord, I would not have known my Lord.' May Allah bestow upon us and you the perfection of faith as well as this station, and may He make our feet firm on the Straight Path on the Day when feet slip.

The Remembrance of Unity

The Unity that is built on Singularity, after discharging the right of divestment, is that the Abidingly Real singularizes you from Him by means of His Singularity when the power of remembrance takes over. This was mentioned first at the beginning of the book, and the following is like a further explanation of it. This is the station of remembrance, i.e., the servant's invocation of Allah, *La ilaha Illa Llah*, as mentioned by Allah Almighty, *So remember Me, and I will remember you* (*Al-Baqarah*, 2:152) and, *and remember God frequently; haply so you will prosper* (*Al-Anfal*, 8:45). The Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and grant him peace, also said: 'Shall I not inform you about the best of your works, the purest in the

sight of your King and the ones that raise your degrees and are better for you than expending gold and silver or meeting your enemies and striking their necks or your necks getting struck by them?' They said: 'What is that, O Messenger of Allah?' He said: 'The remembrance of Allah.'[7]

Remembrance Is the Provision of the Wayfarers

One should also know that remembrance is the provision of the wayfarers towards Allah Almighty through the stations of the heart, just as it is the provision of those who fly to reach Allah, glory be to Him, through the stations of the spirit, also called the subtleties of the states and breaths. No one reaches Allah except through the remembrance of Allah, glorified and exalted is He, because it began from Him and to Him it shall return, *To Him good words go up, and the righteous deed – He uplifts it* (*Fatir*, 35:10). Remembrance takes the one who makes remembrance to the One who is remembered. In fact, it makes the one who makes remembrance remembered, due to the words of Allah Almighty, *So remember Me, and I will remember you* (*Al-Baqarah*, 2:152).

Remembrance is divided into three categories: remembrance through one's words; remembrance through one's works; and remembrance through one's states. *So remember Me* with the expression of refraining from disobedience, and *I will remember* you with mercy and total forgiveness, which

[7] Narrated by Tirmidhi, Ahmad and Ibn Majah.

is the explanation of Allah's words, *who, when they commit an indecency or wrong themselves, remember God, and pray forgiveness for their sins -- and who shall forgive sins but God?* (*Al-'Imran*, 3:135). *So remember Me* with works of the limbs with untainted faith, *and I will remember you* with the life of the heart and entering the Garden, which is explained in the words of Allah, *And whosoever does a righteous deed, be it male or female, believing, We shall assuredly give him to live a goodly life* (*Al-Nahl*, 16:97). *So remember Me* abundantly with your bodies and souls, *and I will remember you* with success and salvation, which is explained by the words of Allah Almighty, *and remember God frequently; haply so you will prosper* (*Al-Anfal*, 8:45). *So remember Me* with your states, longing and love, *and I will remember you* with acceptance, as explained by the Words of Allah Almighty as reported by His Prophet ﷺ: 'Whoever draws to Me a cubit, I draw to him a fathom.'[8] *So remember Me* with entreaty and supplication, *and I will remember you* with My favour and welcome, as explained by Allah's words in the holy saying, '... and whoever comes to Me walking, I'll go to him trotting.' *So remember Me* with exaltation, *and I will remember you* with honouring. *So remember Me* with remembrance that will perish, *and I will remember you* with remembrance that will last. *So remember Me* with a pure inmost secret, *and I will remember you* with pure kindness. *So remember Me* by leaving disaffection, *and I*

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[8] Narrated by Ahmad in his Musnad.

will remember you by keeping My loyalty. *So remember Me* by shunning error, *and I will remember you* with different kinds of gifts. *So remember Me* as you are in yourselves, *and I will remember you* as I am in Myself. *So remember Me* by expending your beings and extinction, *and I will remember you* by granting you witnessing and subsistence. This remembrance is the true meaning of Allah in the holy saying: 'And if he mentions Me within himself, I will mention him within Me.' This is the real remembrance which makes the invoker an invoked and the Invoked an invoker. The invoker, invocation and the Invoked become one, as Allah Almighty says in the Qur'an: *Whose is the Kingdom today?' 'God's, the One, the Omnipotent* (*Ghafir*, 40:16). A poet wrote:

The glass is fine and so is the wine,

They are alike and so there is confusion.

It is as if there is wine but no goblet,

And also as if there is a goblet yet no wine.

One finds the same thing in the case of moths and candles. The candle says to the moth: 'Mention me in yourself, I will mention you in myself.' Mentioning the candle in itself means that the moth will throw itself in its flame; while the mentioning of the moth by the candle is by eagerly waiting

upon it to throw itself in its flame. The mention of the candle by the moth is also through the latter's preoccupation with the candle such that there is no distinction between candle and moth. If one seeks the candle, one will find the moth; and if one seeks the moth, one will find the candle. A poet said:

> I am whom I love and whom I love is I,
>
> We are two souls dwelling in one body.
>
> And so:
>
> Whenever you catch sight of us, you catch sight of them,
>
> And whenever you catch sight of them, you catch sight of us.
>
> I am not one who divulges a secret, I am only
>
> A bridegroom in whose interior her love manifested.
>
> And so when I saw her, I became absorbed in thought
>
> Which made me absent from my entire being.

This is of the blessings of the meanings of, *All things perish, except His Face* (*Al-Qasas*, 28:88), *All that dwells upon the earth is perishing* (*Al-Rahman*, 55:26) and *Every soul shall taste of death* (*Al-'Imaran*, 3:185). Glory be to the One who subsists after the evanescence of His created beings. As for the Sufis, they die before they experience death, and extinguish their own selves as well as others before they are extinguished by real death, *Verily, His are the creation and the command* (*Al-A'raf*, 7:54).

People's Divergent Opinions Regarding Spiritual Audition

The Gnostics and Sufi masters state that people are different as far as their feelings are concerned. Moreover, those of feelings are disparate insofar as understanding is concerned. Likewise, those of understanding vary greatly with regard to taste. The Sufis have of understanding, feeling and taste what other people have. So when the genuine one amongst them displays an ecstatic behaviour upon experiencing an ecstatic finding, which is not necessarily encountered in those who do not have the same understanding or taste as the Sufis, one should not denounce him. This is because the Sufis derive from every understanding an insight, from every consideration a lesson and admonition, from every moment of quietude different ideas, and from every speech categories of wisdom. Indeed, how numerous are the loci of their contemplation that they contemplate and the raptures

they experience!

The knowers of Allah Almighty state that a Sufi during spiritual audition can be moved by a beautiful handicraft or by an admonition, just as he may contemplate during his remembrance the beauty of the Fashioner. Those of them who have not reached the contemplation of beauty can infer the conclusive wisdom and perfection of the Creator from the perfection and outstanding beauty of creation, and see everything in existence of seemly comeliness as the handicrafts of a magnanimous and wise Creator who does not have any equal in beauty. Indeed, His magnanimity is of tremendous consequence.

The knowers of Allah Almighty, such as Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi, have stated that the Sufi engaged in spiritual audition, when he hears a verse of poetry, he takes from it a meaning in his remembrance of his Lord, either by being overjoyed with Him, being fearful of Him, heartbroken vis-à-vis Him or displaying indigence towards Him. His heart goes through all these changes in his remembrance of his Lord. Even if he were to hear the chirping of a bird, he will savour its sound, reflect on the power of Allah Almighty, as well as on the way the bird's throat is perfectly created, how it is made subservient, and he ponders on the shape of its form and how the bird performs its audition. In all this, the Sufi is summoning the glory and sanctity of Allah Almighty. Now, how can anyone censure any Sufi when he summons all these things upon hearing the voice of another human

being, upon which his inward becomes full of remembrance and meditation?

Of the Meanings of Spiritual Audition

Spiritual audition is of two kinds:

- The first kind is legally indifferent (*mubah*). This is the lot of those who get from spiritual audition nothing except the enjoyment of beautiful voices and the summoning of cheerfulness and happiness, or else remembering someone who is absent from them or dead, which instigates their sadness and hence they find comfort in what they hear.
- The second kind is praiseworthy (*mustahabb*). This is for the one who is overwhelmed by the love of Allah Almighty and longing for Him. Spiritual audition instigates in him nothing but praiseworthy traits, an increase of longing for Allah Almighty and the summoning of pleasing states and stations. As for him who hears without a heart and does not know what is legally indifferent or praiseworthy, his blameworthy traits will appear, his vile ulterior motives will remember him, he will covet this world and its unlawfulness, and his audition will abet his devilish insinuations, caprice and sins. This is prohibited. As for the one who listens to spiritual audition which leads him to remembrance of his Lord, meditating on His creation, and causes him to be fearful of his contraventions and reminds him of his afterlife —and, then, this meditation produces in him longing

for Allah, fear of Him and hope in His promise, or becoming cautious of His threat—the audition of such a person is one category of remembrance which shall be inscribed in the scrolls of the righteous.

The Effect of Spiritual Audition

Know that, during spiritual audition, the hearts are receptacles, the ears vessels and the melodies narrated drinks. This is because the voices carry the melodies from the songs to the vessels. If it were not for the soundness of meanings, the forms would not be there. So when the drinks reach their vessels, which are the hearts, they spur praiseworthy character traits, noble states and lofty stations if the vessels are clean; if the vessels are turbid and filthy, they abet ugly hardness, sins and wrongdoing. If the vessels are neither clean nor filthy, nor humble or corrupt, they instigate legally indifferent actions and words. There is no blame on these, according to both opinions. This is because words are the cupbearers of the drinks of songs and melodies which are carried by voices to the vessels, the hearts, which in turn derive the states of their meanings from the presences of the immutable archetypes in proportion with the purity of hearts or their turbidity, and also depending on whether they are charged with the remembrance of Allah Almighty and meditating on the marvels of His creation or filled with vain amusement and sins.

What can the cupbearer do when he goes round

His drink-mates with soured wine vinegar?

Our hearts are vessels whenever

The vessel is good, what it receives becomes good.

A heart that remembers Allah has become a meadow,

And another through amusement has become a dunghill.

The hotbed of roses is unlike the hotbed of other plants,

Nor is the scent of Musk like the smell of onion.

If Colocynth were to be irrigated with honeycombs perpetually,

Colocynth will never yield anything but Colocynth.

The Folk of Ultimate Spiritual Reality Are the Gnostics

The folk of ultimate spiritual reality are the people who possess the knowledge relating to Allah, His Names and

Attributes. Gnosis is the noblest of all knowledge. Ultimate spiritual reality, according to them, amounts to the contemplation of the lights of the mysteries of Lordship. This ultimate reality has a Path which are the 'strictnesses' of the Sacred Law. Whosoever treads this Path shall reach the ultimate spiritual reality. Ultimate spiritual reality is the very end of the 'strictnesses' of this Law. The end of ultimate spiritual reality in no way contradicts the 'strictnesses' of the Sacred Law.

The Gnostics have struck four similitudes for the Sacred Law and ultimate spiritual reality, showing that the Sacred Law is the basis: the sea, the mine, milk and the tree. Spiritual reality is extracted like pearls, gold, butter or glue.

The orator of this world and the next, Ibn Nabata, said in one of his sermons regarding the meaning of transcendence: 'Why do I see that things without the advent of ascensions are not setting?' This expression has baffled a number of eminent scholars of old, but whoever believes in indwelling or union with the Divine is an unbeliever.

Allah Most Holy is far transcendent for the minds to grasp Him; too august is He and far transcendent from the opinion of indwelling. The wings of discursive reason are clipped and cannot ever reach that far. The insights of the greatest scholars have failed to reach that far, nor is Allah grasped by people's grasp of obtaining this grasp. And may Allah send His blessings upon Ahmad the Messenger. Too august is the pavilion of Immensity to attain His grasp by

arrival; and too noble is the sphinx of arrival to be caught by attaining. Rather, the real deal is that, as great as He is in His importance and proof, Allah sets ramparts and ranks for the wayfarers to Him, and stations of the spirit for those who fly by means of Him. Their target is this as long as the wind of care is in their favour and the ship of rectitude sails with them until they reach the mines of guidance. There, they disembark to attain, and dissemble to assemble. The breezes of the solicitudes of Lordship blow, removing the veils of humanity from the face of slavehood upon the assault of the book of the qualities of the silhouette that reveals the darkness of thought. And then the lights of gnosis shall be revealed to them.

And praise be to Allah who has guided us to this, and we were not to find guidance had Allah not guided us, and praise be to Allah Lord of all Being.

MABDA

RED SULPHUR

‘Abd Allah ibn Abi Bakr al-‘Aydarus